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MARCH EDITION | VOLUME 10

"The Upper Floors Are Empty"

~ u/Active_Beginning4210

I was halfway through the pitch about scalable cloud architecture when the guy on the other end racked a shotgun.

"Sir?" I said. The script died in my throat. "Are you... did you just—"

"I don't know how you got this number." The man's voice was shaking. Wet with tears. "But you need to hang up. I'm not buying anything. I'm checking out."

I should have hung up. I was a Senior Account Executive. Everyone said it was a "good job" because it paid six figures and gave stock options, even if it meant selling my soul in fifty-dial increments every day. I was supposed to log the call as "Not Interested," update the status, and move on to the next lead.

But, I didn't. A thought dropped into my brain. It wasn't my thought. It was heavy, sudden, and certain.

[His name is Arthur, the thought said. Tell him about the blue hydrangeas. Tell him Martha wouldn't want them to die of thirst.]

"Arthur," I whispered.

A deep intake of breath on the other end. "Who is this?"

"Did you water Martha's hydrangeas today?" My voice didn't sound like my own. Too calm. Too gentle. "The blue ones by the porch. It's been hot, Arthur. If you do this now, no one is going to water them. They'll be dead by Friday."

After a long drawn out silence. The heavy clack of a shotgun shell hitting hardwood. Then the man breaking down and weeping. I stayed on the line for almost an hour until he promised to put the gun in the safe and go out to the garden with a hose.

When the line went dead, I sat at my desk. My hands were shaking so hard I could barely take off my headset.

I convinced myself it was a prank call. A sick joke by one of the junior sales reps trying to psych me out before the end-of-quarter push. I spent the rest of the day glaring at Ben, who sat in the glass-walled office next to mine, waiting for him to crack a smile. He never did.

Sometimes, once the universe breaks the rules once, it stops pretending they exist.

Two days later, an inbound call got routed to my desk. I was about to give my standard greetings. A woman, cut me short before I could start, asking if this was the crisis hotline. She was in her car. The engine was running. The garage door was closed.

I opened my mouth to say, No, you have the wrong number, please hang up and dial 998.

Instead, that heavy certainty crashed into my skull again.

[Tell her the lock on the back door is sticky. Arthur (Her husband) won't be able to get in to feed the baby if she takes the only good key with her.]

I told her. She turned the car off.

A teenager on an overpass. A man in a dark kitchen with a bottle of pills. A kid pacing outside a convenience store with a stolen revolver. A man on a bridge.

They all thought they were calling someone else. A friend, a hotline, a random string of numbers typed through blurred teary eyes. But the calls kept coming to me. Every single time, I knew exactly what to say.

It was destroying my metrics.

"You've been on five calls today, Elias," my manager, Greg, said the following week, leaning against my desk with a printed spreadsheet. "Your average handle time is through the roof, and your close rate is absolute zero. You're talking to these people for hours. What are you even pitching?"

"Nothing," I said, rubbing my eyes. I hadn't slept more than three hours a night in a week. The adrenaline of saving a life, followed by a crash of hollow exhaustion and worries of my metrics. "They're... wrong numbers."

"Then hang up," Greg snapped. "You have a quota. You have a mortgage. Stop playing therapist and start selling."

I nodded. That was what you did when you had a "good job." You protected it. But I knew I wasn't going to hang up. I couldn't.

By the third week, the calls started following me home. My personal cell phone would ring at 2:00 AM, 4:00 AM, 6:30 AM. I stopped going out with friends. I stopped watching TV. I just sat on my couch, staring at the black screen, waiting for the vibration, terrified of the moment it would happen and terrified of the moment it wouldn't.

Then, on a Tuesday night, the phone rang, but the caller ID didn't say Unknown. It just said Dispatch.

I answered it. "Hello?"

"Elias," a voice said. Her voice sounded like wind chimes, bells, and echo of an empty cathedral. She sounded unspeakably tired.

"Who is this?" I demanded, suddenly angry. "Are you the one hacking my phone? Are you the one routing these calls to me? Who the hell are you?"

"You can call me Ann" the voice said gently. "And yes. I am routing them to you. I am sorry to intrude on your rest, but we are running out of options."

"We? Are you some kind of underground crisis center? Because you have to stop. I'm a software salesman. I'm not trained for this. I'm going to say the wrong thing and someone is going to die!"

"You haven't said a single wrong thing yet," Ann replied. "You listen. You let us give you the words, and you speak them. You have a good heart, Elias. That is a rare commodity down there."

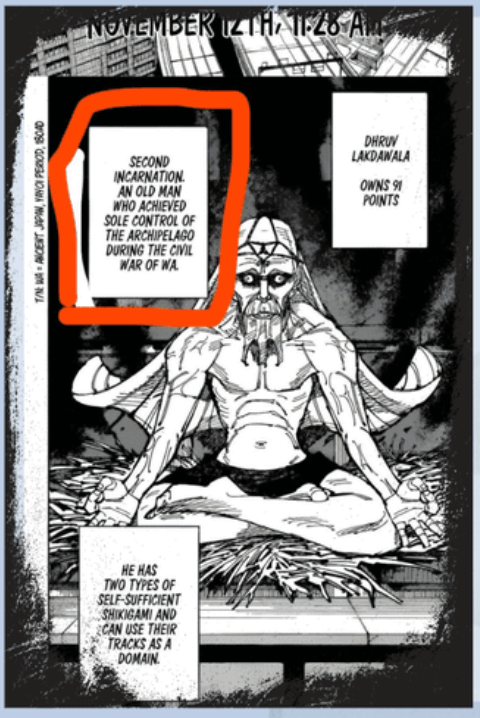
"Down where?" I asked, the hairs on my arms standing up.

A heavy sigh echoed through the speaker. "Humanity grew too loud, Elias. Too desperate. There is so much pain on your earth, and for millennia, we tried to help. We stood by the ledges. We answered the calls. But, empathy is a finite resource, even for us. We burned out. The upper floors are nearly empty. There are not enough angels left to save them anymore."

I stared at the empty dark ceiling of my living room. "You're... you're an angel?"

TO BE CONTINUED

CHARISMATIC CONTRIBUTORS


SECOND INCARNATION. AN OLD MAN WHO ACHIEVED SOLE CONTROL OF THE ARCHIPELAGO DURING THE CIVIL WAR OF WA.
DHRUV LAKDAWALA
OWNS 91 POINTS
HE HAS TWO TYPES OF SELF-SUFFICIENT SHIKIGAMI AND CAN USE THEIR TRACKS AS A DOMAIN.

u/Savings-Ad342

OP casually dropping the lore that Dhruv Lakdawala is the only Indian Jujutsu Kaisen character and the strongest of his era. It really opens up the whole Jujutsu world!

u/NoteOk9064

OP pointing out the undeniable fact that Tsutomu Shibayama, the director behind the globally iconic Doraemon series, truly gave millions of kids the 'best childhood' imaginable.

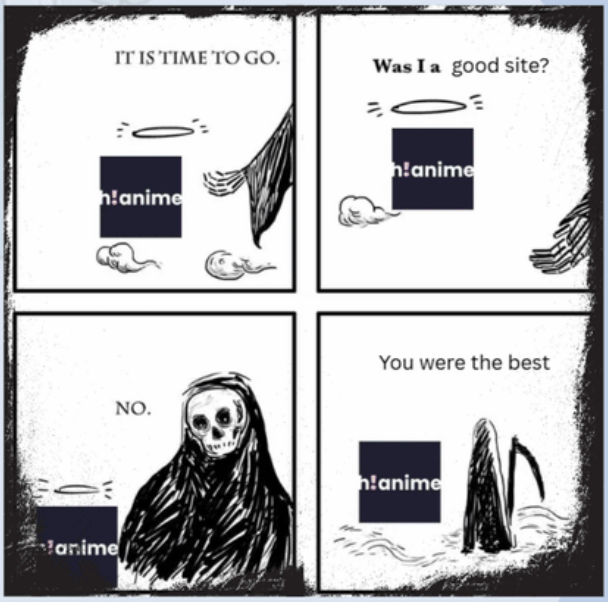
CHARISMATIC CONTRIBUTORS

u/SongUnique8501

OP casually dropping the undeniable truth that Nico Robin is flawless no matter the medium. Seeing the manga, anime, and live-action lined up side-by-side just proves that absolute perfection really does exist in every timeline.

u/Onyxwilson10

OP pointing out the harsh reality of losing h!anime with the absolute perfect meme format. Giving it this legendary send-off proved that it wasn't just a good site, it really was the best.



CHARISMATIC CONTRIBUTORS

u/-Mother-of-Dragons

OP casually pulled up with the most wholesome post of the week, celebrating her 40th birthday with an absolutely epic One Piece cake. It's a beautiful reminder that anime has no age limit.

u/yappinglistener

OP casually dropping the ultimate proof that anime fans literally see the world differently. Turning a golden cloud into Minato just proves that epic anime moments are everywhere if you have the right lens.

CINEMATIC COSPLAYS

u/sankalpita

u/sankalpita brings the ultimate fashion icon to life with an ensemble that is pure Misa Amane goals. This perfectly composed look hits all the right notes, from the detailed leather-look corset and leopard-print panel to the tiered lace skirt and that iconic Death Note book prop. Atmospheric, detailed and utterly faithful to the character's unique 'Death Note' aesthetic.

u/DryEnvironment5545

High stakes and flawless execution! u/DryEnvironment5545 brought the intense energy of Hyakkaou Private Academy straight to Comic Con Gurugram. Nailing the iconic Kakegurui uniform with that crisp red blazer, cross-tie, and pleated plaid skirt, this look is an absolute jackpot.

CINEMATIC COSPLAYS

u/Slight-Public6179

Pure Uchiha aura! u/Slight-Public6179 drops a serious throwback, bringing the legendary rogue ninja Itachi to life. Nailing that brooding aesthetic perfectly with the messy long hair, the scratched Hidden Leaf headband, and the iconic high-collared Akatsuki cloak pulled up over the face. This look carries absolute boss-level energy straight from the Akatsuki hideout.

u/Emotional_Sock8963

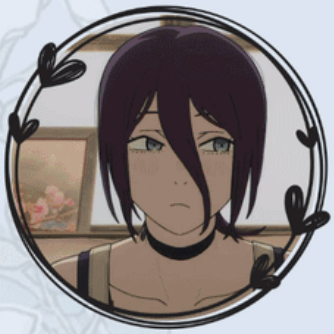
Who needs 100% accuracy when the drip is this good? u/Emotional_Sock8963 drops a super creative, streetwear-inspired take on Choso that totally captures the Death Painting's edgy aesthetic. Nailing the vibe with that iconic chunky black scarf paired with a sleek leather corset and white shirt combo, this look is absolute proof that closet cosplays can carry serious main character energy.

CRAFTY CREWS

u/TechnicalEar5088

u/charm_n_craft

CRAFTY CREWS



u/Unlikely_Dimension55

u/ameowchi

CRAFTY CREWS

u/madhurirao07

u/m4s_here

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u/GothOutOfWater
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u/logan-cycle-809
Curator

u/NoteOk9064
Graphic Designer

u/Active_Beginning4210
Editorial Writer

Bringing a community together takes a village, and this magazine is proof of that. Every article written, page designed and detail polished is the result of volunteers dedicating their time, effort, and creativity to r/animeindian. We extend our deepest gratitude to the amazing team behind Otaku Bhaskar for making this volume a reality. Please enjoy the incredible work they've put together!

BHASKAR

r/AnimeIndian

So, the editors insisted on an introduction. Apparently, "I'm just the girl who tests the soup" isn't "compelling" enough for them. Fine. If I must be under your microscope, let's at least keep the lighting dim-I'm not fond of being looked at too closely.

I'm Maomao. By trade, an apothecary; by unfortun
circumstance, a lady-in-waiting who spends her d
solving "curses" that are usually just poor
ventilation or cheap makeup.
If you're looking for a hero, keep walking.
But if you've been poisoned,
I might be persuaded to help.

Just don't touch my medicine cabinet.

I bite.
And unlike my concoctions,
I don't come with an antidote.

—Maomao

MAOMAO